

Environmental Health Reviews, 2003

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The study of environmental health is undergoing revolutionary changes as we begin to understand more clearly the relationships between human health, wildlife health, and ecosystem health. In effect, a new field of study is being born. Attempts are being made at naming this emerging transdisciplinary field. One such name is “conservation medicine”; a book on that topic was recently reviewed in *Environmental Health Perspectives* (*EHP*) (Ali 2003).

The realization that human health cannot be isolated and studied independently means that scientific disciplines must become much more integrated. Although this integration is exciting, it poses an incredible challenge to the would-be practitioner’s ability to handle mountains of additional information. Not only must this diverse information be reviewed, but it also must be synthesized within the scientist’s existing knowledge base.

Even though there are daunting difficulties presented by our newly acquired knowledge, working in the field of environmental health becomes even more exciting. The explosion of new techniques and approaches and the integration of disciplines make the very near future look as exciting for the environmental health scientist as any other time in history.

EHP must continue to change in order to provide information the practitioners of this new field of conservation medicine require. Our coverage must be broader and more integrative. Fortunately, *EHP* has recognized the needs of its readership and has been providing broader coverage over the years through publication of news, research articles, and monographs. In addition, for the last eight years, *EHP* editors have published an Annual Review issue aimed at broadening the perspectives of our readers.

In developing the Annual Review issue, the editors meet throughout the year to discuss recent scientific advances and select topics for inclusion. This year we have become much more aware of the new trend requiring integration of disciplines. We have asked our authors to assist in this integration of information and to present the information in a critical manner. So, again, this year we present reviews that summarize new developments in environmentally relevant areas, provide a context for these new findings, and provide sufficient background information for those unfamiliar with the specific topic.

We feel that reading *EHP*’s Annual Review issue is an exceptionally good way for individuals beginning their studies in environmental health as well as those well established in their research to assimilate the latest knowledge in this rapidly growing field. With the emerging need for transdisciplinary knowledge, reading the Annual Review issue and other thoughtful, integrative reviews will become a necessity.

This year we address issues associated with endocrine-disrupting chemicals by presenting articles by Welshons et al., who explore the case for low-dose effects of endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and Borgert et al., who review methods for comparing estrogenic activity of endogenous and exogenous chemicals in human milk and infant formula. A review of environmental pollutants and breast cancer by Brody and Rudel allows you to examine current knowledge gaps, design challenges, and contrasting evidence in this important area of research.

You will read about the etiology and pathogenesis of uterine leiomyomas (fibroids), as presented by Flake et al. With Liu et al. you will be able to consider the role of environmental factors in the

late-onset and slow-progressing nature of sporadic Parkinson’s disease. Students and health practitioners alike will be interested in reading the review on the role of genetic polymorphisms in disease susceptibility (Kelada et al.). Explore with Wade et al. the effect of recreational water quality on gastrointestinal illness.

Stay current with the state of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency–sponsored research on particulate matter by reading an update by Lippmann et al. The authors provide updates on biological mechanisms, acute and chronic effects, dosimetry, and exposure assessment. Learn how the presence of metals in hazardous waste sites can affect the biodegradation of organic pollutants (Sandrin and Maier). And finally, read the mini-monograph on the highly charged issue of the allergenic potential of genetically modified foods (Bannon et al.; Bernstein et al.; Germolec et al.; Kimber et al.; Metcalfe; Selgrade et al.).

Let us add that the mini-monograph is a new concept for *EHP*. These mini-monographs go beyond the limits of the traditional reviews by providing insight and depth of coverage not possible in a traditional review article. Because environmental health studies are becoming more transdisciplinary, the mini-monograph series might prove to be the future review format of choice. Your feedback on this new concept would be appreciated.

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